



## Complaints high against NOPD officers

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### **Katie Moore / Eyewitness News**

NEW ORLEANS -- New Orleans Police Officer Melvin Williams is a 17-year veteran of the NOPD, and this week, he's standing trial on a federal deprivation of rights charge for the 2005 beating death of Raymond Robair in Treme.

Officer Matthew Dean Moore is on trial for allegedly covering up the beating by writing a bogus report. Just days before Hurricane Katrina, the NOPD cleared the officers of all wrongdoing.

The feds indicted them on criminal charges last July.

"The public doesn't know who the good officers are and who the officers are that aren't so good," said Metropolitan Crime Commission President Rafael Goyeneche.

Last month, the U.S. Department of Justice released the results of its investigation into the NOPD, and found in recent years, the department has been "indifferent" to its officers' improper use of force, and that its complaint resolution processes have little legitimacy in the community.

"The vast majority of complaints of police misconduct do not have anything to do with professionalism, morality, ethics or integrity, around the country. Here in New Orleans, we're still trying to grapple with what that actually looks like," said NOPD Superintendent Ronal Serpas.

A new database of complaints shared by the NOPD's Public Integrity Bureau and New Orleans' Independent Police Monitor should show who, and what, the public

complains about most. It's expected to give the public their first real glimpse into the volume and types of complaints received by PIB.

"We're finally beginning to crack that [blue] curtain and get a look inside at what is really going on in our community," said SUNO Criminologist John Penny.

Already, the volume of complaints against New Orleans Police outnumbers Los Angeles and Austin when compared to the number of police officers, according to Police Monitor Susan Hutson.

Last year, the NOPD received 1,600 complaints.

"That's over a case per officer. That's much more than when I was in Los Angeles where it was roughly 50 to 60 percent of the department would have complaints. The same thing in Austin. We're well over a complaint per officer here in New Orleans. We've got to bring that down," Hutson said.

"Not that many officers are physically on the streets. So, you're looking at the same officers receiving multiple complaints," Goyeneche said.

Experts said it's likely the result of both New Orleanians complaining more and having more reasons to complain. Either way, Hutson said the number is high.

She is expected to unveil the new, shared database at a news conference Tuesday, releasing more details about what kinds of investigations and how many are being lodged against the NOPD.